



April 2, 2018

Board of Supervisors  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Supervisors,

Last year, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adopted regulations governing the sale and distribution of adult use cannabis, following hasty, high-pressure deliberations and over two years of meetings by the Cannabis State Legalization Task Force that, in large part, failed to perform meaningful community outreach to the Chinatown community. For the reasons set forth in this letter, we are requesting that all Chinatown mixed use districts now be exempt from the permissive cannabis regulations adopted last year.

For over 30 years, we at the Community Tenants Association have organized to defend the rights of low-income tenants throughout San Francisco. We represent Chinese seniors, youth & families, as well as low-income tenants across the City, and we have been at the forefront of social justice issues in San Francisco since our founding. Contrary to media reports from last year which oversimplified and trivialized the concerns of Chinese residents, we are not angling for opportunistic gain. We are only advocating for the stability of our tightly-knit and fragile constituent groups.

As evidenced by daily changes in our neighborhood, and as frequently noted in Chinese-language press, **Chinatown is facing extreme gentrification and displacement pressures.** We have a long, proud tradition of community planning to ensure self-determination and cultural preservation. The competition for commercial space is rigorous, and local merchants catering to the cultural and traditional needs of our large immigrant community are being pushed out due to high rents and illegal conversions. At least until this newly-legal industry stabilizes, the prospect of high rents that cannabis retail can afford is causing property owners to hold out on renting vacant commercial space and, in some instances, to raise the rents of existing community-serving retail space – sometimes doubling them – in order to replace them with higher rent businesses. Our fragile commercial corridors in Chinatown will not survive this pressure.

Chinatown is also one of the densest neighborhoods in the city, with a high concentration of Single Resident Occupancy (SRO) hotels. These SROs have historically been the only affordable housing for new immigrants, families, seniors and workers in Chinatown. **Chinatown SRO buildings are old, the walls are often thin, and secondhand smoke continues to be a problem for many of our tenants.** In lower-income communities, we live on top of each other, and every decision impacts a neighbor. As more and more of our SRO housing stock is taken over by urban professionals with significantly more disposable income, these basic

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considerations are disappearing. Recent studies have suggested that secondhand cannabis smoke is comparable to and potentially even more harmful than secondhand tobacco smoke, contributing to heart attack and stroke. Seniors and children have enough health issues to worry about without laws that will encourage and amplify the effects of secondhand smoke, including in and around our public parks, bus stops and hard-fought open space.

We understand the political sensitivity of regulating cannabis, and would not request this exemption were it not for the fragility of our existing commercial corridors and the health risks posed to many of our low-income tenants in Chinatown. We hope that we can have a more rational, measured conversation about this now that the important conversations around equity and citywide access have been mostly addressed. Thank you to Supervisors Kim and Peskin and Planning Commissioner Myrna Melgar for raising these concerns on our behalf, and for being open to reasonable legislative changes to a law that will have a profound impact on low-income communities of color. There is still an extraordinary amount of work to be done on behalf of our communities, and we wholeheartedly appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Wing Hoo Leung'.

Wing Hoo Leung  
President, Community Tenants Association

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